

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 820

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: FEBRUARY 3, 2022

The Senate Education Committee favorably reports Senate Bill No. 820.

This bill establishes the Division of School Desegregation in the Department of Education. The purpose of the division is to identify instances of de facto racial and socioeconomic segregation of school districts and to ensure better integration and a more diverse enrollment in public schools. The Commissioner of Education will appoint a Director of the Division of School Desegregation, who will be qualified by training and experience to perform the duties of the division, from among current department employees.

Under the bill, the director's duties will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- a. compiling statistics on the racial, ethnic, and economic composition of students for each public school in the State;
- b. a comparative analysis of the educational outcomes of students enrolled in highly-segregated schools with the educational outcomes of students enrolled in more racially- and economically-integrated schools;
- c. reviewing housing patterns and State laws and regulations which require students to attend schools in their resident districts;
- d. reviewing and making recommendations to strengthen the "Interdistrict Public School Choice Program Act," P.L.2010, c.65 (C.18A:36B-14 et seq.) to:
 - (1) promote and increase participation in the program; and
 - (2) ensure that student population diversity in all districts participating in a choice district program is maintained;
- e. examining other states which have implemented programs that have successfully increased the ethnic, racial, and economic diversity of a school district's student population; and
- f. the development of a strategic plan for increasing and subsequently maintaining diversity in all school districts, which plan may not be used to supersede a court-ordered or administrative court-ordered desegregation plan, and which is required to be adopted within 180 days of the effective date of the bill. The bill requires the Director of the Division of School Desegregation to adopt a new strategic plan every five years thereafter.

The bill requires the Director of the Division of School Desegregation to submit the strategic plan to the Governor and the Legislature.